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## **Semiotics of the Ottoman Bridge: Between Its Origins and Ivo Andrić**

### **ABSTRACT**

One of the persisting motives in the Southeastern European cultures is a bridge. This metaphor occurs since at least 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it became used in political projects aiming to unite Southern Slavs (e.g. J. J. Strossmayer). In most of the cases, it symbolizes bridging the gap between the West and the East. However, it was the Ottoman stone bridges that were filled with a plethora of metaphorical meanings, mostly thanks to the Yugoslavian novelist Ivo Andrić. Stone bridges, a part of the Ottoman heritage in the Balkan, started to be perceived as symbols of humanist values and durability of edifices among the contingency of human existence.

### **KEYWORDS**

Spatial Semiotics, Ivo Andrić, Ottoman Architecture, Western Balkans, Yugoslavia, Orientalism

### **Introduction**

If one wished to characterize the former Yugoslavian lands with the use of architectonic objects, Ottoman bridges like Old Bridges of Višegrad and Mostar or Stone Bridge in Skopje would be among the buildings most permeated with meanings. Their iconicity was formed to a large extent by the literary oeuvre of Ivo Andrić.

This popularity led to banalisation and much of modernist Yugoslavian bridge symbolism, whose main contributor was Andrić, entered the general symbolical universe of Western and Slavic meanings of this category of objects. Both comparative mythology, Slavic ethnolinguistics and classical psychoanalysis are rather consistent in enumerating its connotations. Firstly, a bridge can stand for a masculine element in the cosmos, as contrasted with the feminine, e.g. river or water in general.<sup>1</sup> Another possible and culturally even more common symbolism of the bridge is one of transition or transgression<sup>2</sup> be it from mother's womb to the world, from life to death,<sup>3</sup> from an old to a new year,<sup>4</sup> or from any possible point to another,<sup>5</sup> i.e. being reducible to any change or transition in general.<sup>6</sup> Last but not least, the very act of building a bridge was traditionally considered sacred and their builders were not infrequently included into the class of priests, which is, for instance, reflected in a title of the Catholic pope, *pontifex maximus*,<sup>7</sup> ultimately originating in the Roman mythology.

However, while this plethora of cultural meanings may contribute to the productivity of reading of a bridge metaphor, it does not explain the very phenomenon of Andrić's portrait of the Ottoman edifices. While their iconicity was mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, it would be advisable to define what it means for an object to be an icon. According to the classical semiotic investigations of Charles S. Peirce, an icon is a sign that derives its meaning from the physical resemblance to the denotation, icons *imitate* it.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, *iconic studies*, developing in the last decades, distance themselves from such a Peircian notion of icon, regarded as too static and too attached to pictorial depictions. Instead, they stress dialectics of presence and absence, set in motion by an icon that generates a surplus of meaning.<sup>9</sup> In this paper both explications of this notion can be of great use, firstly—

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<sup>1</sup> *Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych*, t. 1: Kosmos. Ziemia, woda, podziemie, red. J. Bartmiński, Lublin 1999, pp. 326, 297. P. Friedman, *The Bridge: A Study in Symbolism*, "The Psychoanalytic Quarterly" 1952, No. 21 (1), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Мифы народов мира. Энциклопедия*, Т. 2: К–Я, ред. С. А. Токарев, Москва 1982, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> P. Friedman, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Мифы народов мира...*, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> P. Friedman, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> *Мифы народов мира...*, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. S. Peirce, *What is a Sign?*, [in:] *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2, Bloomington 1998, pp. 5–6.

<sup>9</sup> G. Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen. Die Macht des Zeichens*, Berlin 2007, p. 38.

pointing to its connection to the denotation (e.g. a physical bridge), secondly—explaining the emergence of the surplus meanings. Only such a combination would allow answering a question of how engineering structures were able to embody, for instance, the Yugoslavian attempt to overcome the *East : West* contradiction.

## Subject of Investigation

As it has been already mentioned, the subject of these investigations is the Ottoman bridges in the Western Balkan area (and more specifically former Yugoslavia). They are perceived as icons in the framework of semiotics (signifiers by the virtue of resemblance) and *iconic turn* (signifiers possessing a meaning irreducible to their signified). This meaning can be, however, enriched with the use of an everyday understanding of the notion *icon*, too—as an object of religious or entirely secular cult.

This concept is well reflected by the Oxford English Dictionary, which distinguishes two meanings of this lexeme without any specifiers:

1. A devotional painting of Christ or another holy figure, typically executed on wood and used ceremonially in the Byzantine and other Eastern Churches.
2. A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, this second meaning is completely absent from the normative Serbian dictionary in its newest compact edition, *Rečnik Matice srpske*:

**ikona** ž grč. slika Isusa Hrista, Bogorodice ili sveca izrađena na drvenoj ili limenoj podlozi u vizantijsko-pravoslavnoj umetnosti; slika sveca čiji se dan slavi kao krsno ime.<sup>11</sup>

Meanings connected to computing, as well as to “secular icon cult” are completely absent. This may be a result both of a conservative approach of dictionary compilers, as well as of a reluctance on the side of language users to use

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<sup>10</sup> “Icon”, [in:] *Oxford English Dictionary*, [online] <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/icon> [accessed: 4.01.2019].

<sup>11</sup> *Rečnik srpskoga jezika*, ur. M. Vujanić, D. Gortan-Premk, M. Dešić, R. Dragičević, M. Nikolić, Lj. Nogo, V. Pavković, N. Ramić, R. Stijović, M. Radović-Tešić, E. Fekete, Novi Sad 2011, p. 451 [**icon** fem. Greek a picture of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary or a saint painted on a wooden or metal surface in the Byzantine-Orthodox art; a picture of the saint whose feast day is celebrated as a patron saint day].

a word connected to own religious sphere in a secular manner.<sup>12</sup> These remarks can, however, stay marginal, as in one culture objects may be treated in the role of *icons*, without being named as such.

Last but not least, the presupposition about iconicity of the analyzed objects can be, thus, strengthened not only with regard at a culture-forming role of the novels and stories written by Ivo Andrić, one of the codifiers of the mythical role played by a bridge. It is also derived from the very fact of them being used as souvenirs in bookshop window displays in every bigger city of Western Balkans.

Following parts of this paper will try to explain what exactly the connotative content of the Ottoman and Andrićian “bridge” symbol is and in which cultural codes (resp. semiospheres) it is valid.<sup>13</sup>

### Icons Outside the Semiosphere?

The above-mentioned proofs for the iconic status of the Ottoman bridges do not mean that this condition is not questionable. As Russian semiotician Yuriy Lotman stated, signs (icons included) exist and signify only in the framework of a specific semiosphere.<sup>14</sup> Given that in the modern era one of the most strongly defined semiospheres is national cultures,<sup>15</sup> there emerges a question in the framework of which community one can talk about iconicity of the analyzed objects after the Yugoslavian federation dissolved.

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<sup>12</sup> It is also worth noting that this polysemy is not that eminent in Polish dictionaries and if appears, it limits itself to the semantic domain of fashion. However, it is not absent at all, which means that even a strictly normative use would give a possibility to transfer the word from one semantic domain to another. For example, *Wielki słownik języka polskiego* distinguishes following meanings: “1. [in an Orthodox church] *art* a painting of a Byzantine or Early Christian style depicting holy personages surrounded by religious symbolic, most often painted on wood, without perspective and chiaroscuro, 2. [on a computer] *IT* a picture on a screen of a computer monitor, on which one clicks in order to open an application, file, folder or perform other operation in the system, 3. [style] a person or a thing perceived as a symbol of something” (*Wielki słownik języka polskiego*, red. P. Żmigrodzki, [online] [http://wsjp.pl/index.php?id\\_hasla=4680&ind=0&w\\_szukaj=ikona](http://wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=4680&ind=0&w_szukaj=ikona) [accessed: 4.01.2019]).

<sup>13</sup> The idea of connotative content of a symbol is understood as in the tradition of spatial semiotics originated by R. Barthes, *Introduction to the Semiotics of Space*, [in:] *The City and the Sign. An Introduction to Urban Semiotics*, eds. M. Gottdiener, A. Ph. Lagopoulos, New York 1986; U. Eco, *Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture*, [in:] *The City and the Sign...*, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Ю. Лотман, *Внутри мыслящих миров*, Москва 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. A. Kłosowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 15–51.

In this context discussions about the national belonging of Ivo Andrić could be mentioned,<sup>16</sup> as they entail the entirety of the projected semiosphere of a preferred national culture with its attitude towards the Oriental heritage and its interpretations of the Ottoman architecture. Nationalist interpretations of the Andrić's work that emerged during the 1990s were split along ethnic lines.

Serbian nationalist readings tended towards exclusive rights to the Nobel prize winner, which was combined with an Orientalist perspective on his depiction of Bosnia and Bosnian Muslims. This is well illustrated by the Radovan Karadžić's interpretation of the story *Pismo iz 1920* to support his views on impossibility of multi-ethnic coexistence in Bosnia, as well as by interpretations of *The Bridge on the Drina* as a novel exclusively about the "suffering of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina," as proposed by literary critic Zoran Konstantinović.<sup>17</sup>

Just as Andrić's ambivalent perception of the Ottoman heritage was ignored by the Serbian nationalist audience, material remnants of those times were met with similar silence. In fact, Ottoman heritage influenced Serbian architecture thoroughly and historically it was not uncommon to affirm this impact, which is visible e.g. in adapting features of vernacular houses in Yugoslavian folklorism or meticulous conservation of some of the Turkish monuments in the real-socialist times. However, for instance, a synthesis *History of Serbian Culture (Istorija srpske kulture)* edited by Pavle Ivić and published in 1994, when dealing with architecture, omits the Ottoman past completely—it focuses on medieval art and post-1833 historicist construction, while from rural architecture only those styles are discussed that display the least Oriental influences.<sup>18</sup>

Croatian nationalists were not coherent in their approach towards Ivo Andrić, as the writer started to be absent from the school curricula, while his Croatian ethnic background was still stressed.<sup>19</sup> Not only is the Yugoslavian

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. I. Lovrenović, *Ivo Andrić: Paradoks o šutnji*, „Časopis za kulturu, književnost i društvena pitanja” 2008, br. 13 (1–2); K. Sang Hun, *Andrić as an Object of Hate: Reception of Ivo Andrić's Works in the Post-Yugoslav Context*, „Slavistična revija” 2011, No. 59 (1); A. Bartulović, *Postjugosławińskie interpretacje orientalizmu Iwo Andrić: niejednoznaczność osmańskiego dziedzictwa w Bośni i Hercegowinie*, „Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne” 2017, nr 56.

<sup>17</sup> K. Sang Hun, op. cit. p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> *Istorija srpske kulture*, ur. P. Ivić, Beograd 1994. On the other hand it should be noted that the rare remnants of the Ottoman past in Serbia are in general well reconstructed after a period of nationalist attacks throughout the 1990s and early 2000s: Islam-Aga Hadrović Mosque in Niš and Šejh-Mustafa Türbe in 2013, Bajrakli Mosque in Belgrade in 2012. In a cliché media discourse their uniqueness and bearing witness to multiculturalism of Serbia is not infrequently stressed.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. I. Lovrenović, op. cit.; K. Sang Hun, op. cit.

Nobel prize winner relatively absent in the semiotic universe of the Croatian national culture; a similar fate is also shared by the Ottoman architectonic heritage. As Zagreb-based architect Zlatko Karač points out, Turkish-Ottoman monuments are not only preserved in a small number and poor shape, but they have been poorly researched until recently. While most of them were destroyed in the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century Reconquista, some other—even not that distinctly Islamic objects as bridges—were demolished as late as after the World War II. On the other hand, today rare existing remnants of the Ottoman heritage are affirmed, reconstructed with respect paid to their past and often treated as bearing witness to a meeting of the East and the West, as it was in the case of the reconstruction of the Đakovo Church of All Saints.<sup>20</sup> Last but not least, this was not always the case—the destruction of the Mostar Old Bridge by Croatian nationalist militias in 1993 is often interpreted as an act of urbicide targeted against it as a symbol of multiculturalism and Bosnian-Croatian coexistence.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the Bosniak nationalist readings perceived Andrić as an Orientalist and a forerunner of chauvinist Great Serbia. An example of such perspective can be found e.g. in a Muhsin Rizvić's study *Bosnian Muslims in Andrić's World (Bosanski Muslimani u Andrićevom svijetu)*.<sup>22</sup> The author accuses the Yugoslavian Nobel prize winner of imposing "a sense of historical guilt on the Turks and Bosnian Moslems, justifying the crimes committed over the Moslem population in the 1990s."<sup>23</sup> A completely different attitude guided Bosniak perception of the Ottoman architectonic heritage, whose appreciation was never really discontinued. It was affirmed by Austro-Hungarian authorities, trying to gain the loyalty of their new subjects by building in an Orientalist neo-Moorish style. This legacy was less followed in Royal Yugoslavia, but even there the Turkish traits were present in folklorist architecture. The end of the 1930s witnessed a birth of a new generation of Bosnian architects affirming a synthesis between Corbusian high modernism and the traditional Ottoman heritage—Dušan Grabrijan, Juraj Neidhardt and Zlatko Ugljen, active throughout the whole real-socialist period.<sup>24</sup> In the Bosniak nationalist approaches towards

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<sup>20</sup> Z. Karač, *Tursko-islamska arhitektura i graditeljstvo u Hrvatskoj*, [in:] *Hrvatska i Turska. Povijesno-kulturni pregled*, ur. K. Jurčević, O. Ramljak, Z. Hasanbegović, Zagreb 2016.

<sup>21</sup> E. Gunzburger Makaš, *Interpreting Multivalent Sites: New Meanings of Mostar's Old Bridge, "Centropa"* 2005, No. 5 (1); M. Coward, *Urbicide. The politics of urban destruction*, London 2008.

<sup>22</sup> M. Rizvić, *Bosanski Muslimani u Andrićevu svijetu*, Sarajevo 1995.

<sup>23</sup> K. Sang Hun, op.cit., p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> D. Grabrijan, J. Neidhardt, *Arhitektura Bosne i put u suvremeno*, Ljubljana 1957.

the Ottoman heritage such a viewpoint is connected with a more ambivalent view on modernity and, what is more important, national exclusivism, denying a possibility of any Orthodox (i.e. Serb) or Catholic (i.e. Croat) influence.<sup>25</sup>

## Icons and Orient

The stereotypical symbolism of a bridge can be subsumed under a nexus of meanings derived from its transgressive or transitional connotations, as it has been already mentioned in the introductory part of the paper. However, it is not the only stereotypical meaning superstructured over this kind of objects. It coincided with the rise of nationalisms when a clichée formulation labeling a number of Central and Eastern European regions as bridges between the East and the West emerged. Not only was Yugoslavia dubbed such a bridge by Josip J. Strossmayer; such denomination was e.g. a part of a geopolitical concept conceived by Czechoslovakian president Edvard Beneš. This metaphor is also excessively used in promotional materials of various eastern regions of Poland. A danger contained in such a banalized use was discovered by a Balkanist critique. It points out that the cliché figure of the bridge stands for something lacking own specific features, a mere connector between a starting point and a destination. As Maria Todorova writes in the preface to her book *Imagining the Balkans*:

The Balkans [...] have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroads. The bridge as a metaphor for the region has been so closely linked to the literary oeuvre of Ivo Andrić, that one tends to forget that its use both in outside descriptions, as well as in each of the Balkan literature and everyday speech, borders on the banal. The Balkans have been compared to a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia. [...] The Balkans are also a bridge between stages of growth, and this invokes labels such as semi-developed, semi-colonial, semi-civilized, semi-oriental.<sup>26</sup>

In that way a bridge metaphor would perfectly fulfill the function expected by the Western imperialist discourses about the Balkan. This observation was later elaborated by Katarina Luketić, who pointed out not only the use of the bridge metaphor by the imperialist Great Powers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but also its kinship with the Nazi German notion of *Südosteuroopa*.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I. Lovrenović, *Kulturni identitet Bosne i Hercegovine?*, [online] <http://ivanlovrenovic.com/2014/03/kulturni-identitet-bosne-i-hercegovine> [accessed: 4.01.2019]. This does not mean that such syntheses are not studied in local specialist *milieus*, not that thoroughly influenced by nationalism.

<sup>26</sup> M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford 2009, pp. 15–16.

<sup>27</sup> K. Luketić, *Balkan: od geografije do fantazije*, Zagreb 2013.

This kind of Balkanist critique of possible imperialist uses of the bridge metaphor should be obviously distinguished from some strains of Serbian nationalist criticism of Andrić as a 'Jesuit', an agent of the anti-national West. They are entwined in another kind of Balkanist discourse—a nationalist one, as it has been demonstrated well by Luketić.<sup>28</sup>

An additional problem in the investigations about the bridges interpreted in the context of overcoming *East : West* contradiction in the Western Balkans emerges in connection to the very construction of the notion *East*. As it has been already mentioned, Ivo Andrić can be perceived as the main producer of the connotative content of bridges. However, his attitude towards what is Oriental, Muslim or non-European is sometimes perceived as controversial and reproducing Orientalist stereotypes.<sup>29</sup> Most of the accusations concern Andrićian depiction of Oriental characters, while his symbolical interpretations of the role of the Ottoman bridges should be rather (re)evaluated in the context of literary conceptions and depictions of peripheral modernization, its possibility, and dangers it can entail, the conceptions and depictions that in the Andrić's writing seem to be rather nuanced.

On the other hand, the plethora of meanings superstructured on the figure of the bridge by modernist writing—mostly in the Andrić's oeuvre—create a semantic surplus that can probably avoid the trap of Balkanism.

## Bridges

Meanings of codes are, regardless of being languages or edifices, determined historically. Although an attempt of a non-semiotic perception of any object runs a danger of falling into a coil of infinite semiosis, one of the goals of these investigations is to prove the historical character of the iconicity of the analyzed objects and contingency of the Ivo Andrić's role as the initiator of their connotative content.

As a historian of the Ottoman art Selen Morkoç points out, Turkish architects of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century perceived their works as things of utilitarian and pragmatic character, while the idea of art for art's sake was alien to them.<sup>30</sup> This is witnessed by the treatises written by Mimar Sinan, the architect of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. M. Rizvić, op. cit.; E. Kazaz, *Egzistencijalnost/povijestnost Bosne – Interpretacija u zamci ideologije*, „Novi izraz” 2001, no. 10–11, [online] <http://postjugo.filg.uj.edu.pl/baza/files/424/andric-bosna.pdf> [accessed: 4.01.2019]; I. Lovrenović, *Ivo Andrić...*, op. cit.; K. Sang Hun, op. cit.; A. Bartulović, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> S. Morkoç, *A Study of Ottoman Narratives on Architecture: Text, Context and Hermeneutics*, Bethesda 2010, p. 222.



Višegrad's Old Bridge, where he presents himself as an artisan, not making any difference between representative or sacral buildings and any other engineering structures:

I was eager and aspired to the carpenter's trade. I became a steadfast compass in the master's service and kept an eye on the centre and the orbit (*merkez ü medâr*). Later, like a [moving] compass drawing a circumference, I longed to move to [other] lands. For a time, I traversed the Arab and Persian lands in the service of the sultan and acquired a sought-after bit [of wisdom] from the crenellation of every *iwan* and a provision [of knowledge] from every ruined dervish lodge.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, already in the Ottoman era perception of architecture was ambivalent. Although the profession of the architect was perceived pragmatically, their works were sometimes interpreted as a *mystical body*, a model of the universe (or analogously, but going even further—architect's body was interpreted as an architectonic object).<sup>32</sup>

On a primarily engineering structure of the bridge, modernist literature superstructured a whole series of connotations, for which, in the case of the Southern Slavic literary universe, Ivo Andrić was the most responsible author. His understanding of the bridge symbolism can be reconstructed for example on the basis of a novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, story *The Bridge on the Žepa* or essay *Bridges*.<sup>33</sup> The latter may depict in the most concise way signification of BRIDGE as a sign that was created by Andrić. The Yugoslavian Nobel prize winner treats this kind of building above all as a symbol of humanist values, common to all human being:

[Bridges] are more important than houses, more sacred, and more universal than temples. They belong to all and treat all alike; they are useful, always built for a purpose, at a spot where most human needs entwine; they are more durable than other buildings and serve no secret or evil purpose.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> M. Sinan, *Sinan's Autobiographies. Five Sixteenth-Century Texts*, ed. G. Necipoğlu, trans. H. Crane, E. Akin, Leiden 2006, p. 115.

<sup>32</sup> S. Morkoç, pp. 258–274.

<sup>33</sup> I. Andrić, *Sabrana djela*, knj. 1: Na Drini ćuprija, Sarajevo 1981; I. Andrić, *Most na Žepi*, [in:] *Sabrana djela*, knj. 6: Žeđ, Sarajevo 1981; I. Andrić, *Mostovi*, [in:] *Sabrana djela*, knj. 10: Staze-lica-predeli, Sarajevo 1981.

<sup>34</sup> „[Mostovi] su važniji od kuća, svetiji, jer opštiji, od hramova. Svačiji i prema svakom jednaki, korisni, podignuti uvek smisleno, na mestu na kom se ukrštava najveći broj ljudskih potreba, istrajniji su od drugih građevina i ne služe ničem što je tajno ili zlo”. Translations by A. Kurtović from the Ivo Andrić's essay *Bridges (Mostovi)*; I. Andrić, *Bridges*, “Spirit of Bosnia” 2006, No. 1 (1), [online] <http://www.spiritofbosnia.org/volume-1-no-1-2006-january/bridges/> [accessed: 4.01.2019].

For Andrić their transport function seems to consist only of the positive aspects of the relations between human beings. Bridges can also stand for the rational element present (since) forever in human nature:

[Bridges] show the place where humankind encountered an obstacle and did not stop before it, but overcame and bridged it the way humankind could, according to understanding, taste, and circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

The symbol of the bridge incorporates not only the conviction about the historically fixed elements of human nature; the Yugoslavian Nobel prize winner fills it also with the very idea of endurance and eternity:

For everything is a transition, a bridge whose ends fade away into the infinity and toward which all earthly bridges are nothing but mere playthings, pale symbols.<sup>36</sup>

However, apart from the connotations explicated by Ivo Andrić in his oeuvre, the bridge symbol derives its meanings also from geographical settings of the novel and stories. These connotations are additionally strengthened due to the Ivo Andrić's status as the only Yugoslavian Nobel prize winner. Bearing in mind all the previously mentioned contents (or also because of them), the bridge became simultaneously a positive metaphor of Yugoslavia and/or the Balkans. On the other hand, this metaphor is not lacking ambivalence—as it has been already mentioned, it can be interpreted as a Balkanist one, pointing to its mere communicative function between a starting point and a destination.

Evolution of the connotative content specific to the bridge symbol in the Western Balkans proceeded, thus, from a relative absence of signification in the times of the construction of the first objects in the Ottoman era, through a modernist meaning complex produced mostly by Ivo Andrić, up to its deconstruction in the last three decades.

This deconstruction renders the Andrićian ideas about overcoming the division between the East and the West into a position of *unwanted heritage*, a term usually applied to pieces of art, for instance modernist architecture built in the times of the real-socialism in Yugoslavia (cf. e.g. a Croatian film *Neželjena baština* from 2016 directed by Irena Škorić). Originally, however, it was coined by an Austrian art historian, living at the break of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alois Riegl.

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<sup>35</sup> „[Mostovi] pokazuju mesto na kome je čovek naišao na zapreku i nije zastao pred njom, nego je savladao i premostio kako je mogao, prema svom shvatanju, ukusu, i prilikama kojima je bio okružen”.

<sup>36</sup> „Jer, sve je prelaz, most čiji se krajevi gube u beskonačnosti, a prema kom su svi zemni mostovi samo dečije igračke, bleđi simboli”.

For him, *unwanted heritage* (*ungewolltes Denkmal*) was constituted by all monuments that were worthy of protection due to their aesthetic value rather than the ideology of memory in a given community.<sup>37</sup> While the use of this term in reference to Andrić or the Yugoslavian architecture deviates from the original use, appreciating only the aesthetic value of an object, and not its social message, it is useful to stress its potential for countering hegemonic ideologies of memory.

Not only had the deconstruction of the narrative of the common past rendered the Andrićian bridge symbolism obsolete; the very historical facts added up to its ambivalence. One can just mention massacres on the Višegrad bridge perpetrated in 1992 by Serbian nationalist militias on the local Muslim population or the destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar by Croatian nationalist militia in 1992, later interpreted as an act of a deliberate uricide.

This necessary ambivalence is perhaps best reflected by the Saša Stanišić's novel *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* (*Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*),<sup>38</sup> where the Višegrad bridge and a neighboring riverside is still an innocent childhood scenery, but the whole picture is becoming overshadowed by symptoms of an imminent war terror. It is a question of the future if, from a plethora of possible re-semiotisations, the bridge will ever be filled with the Andrićian symbolism of the common fate of the Western Balkan nations.

## Conclusions

This paper was an attempt to prove the semiotically iconic status of the Ottoman bridges in the national cultures of the former Yugoslavian countries. However, their status in e.g. Serbian or Croatian semiosphere is ambivalent. This architecture is perceived as neither own, nor alien, nor as such, that could be in all its aspects integrated with the universes of the national cultures. A similar position is occupied by the Andrić's works—they can be either marginalized or interpreted in a nationally reductionist manner. A peculiar situation can be observed in Bosniak culture, where nationalist circles on one hand try to affirm Ottoman architectonic heritage and, on the other, portrait Ivo Andrić and his narrative as exclusively Orientalist. Drawing on the reception of the Andrićian bridge symbolism, an interesting process of meaning production for the Ottoman bridges was reconstructed—from the absence of signification, through modernist-humanist meaning complex, up to its deconstruction.

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<sup>37</sup> A. Riegl, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*, Wien 1903, pp. 6–7.

<sup>38</sup> S. Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*, München 2008.

One can notice a parallel with another type of the iconic object, namely, with modernist housing of former Yugoslavia. While most of the architectonic heritage could be easily inscribed into new, nationalist narratives about the ethnic past and into new, ethnically split semiospheres of national cultures, the modernist housing had become a symbol for a real-socialist, multinational federation, too.

It was built as, on one hand, a modern machine for living in, free from surplus meanings. As it was demonstrated in this paper, such an engineering, pragmatic approach to construction is, however, not exclusive to modernity. Its manner is somehow similar to Ottoman architecture, also putting a strong emphasis on an architect's work as a craft.

On the other hand, since the very beginning of the Yugoslavian modernist project, it was intended as a symbol of the country's non-aligned modernity, overcoming the East : West division.<sup>39</sup> The rather unexpected parallel with the post-Andrićian bridges, thus, holds also in this respect. However, similarly as in the case of the latter, since the end of the 1980s, the old significations were deconstructed and re-semiotised (the latter mostly as the Oriental heritage, the former as relics of a failed socialist urban culture),<sup>40</sup> and both the *blocks*, as well as the *bridges* became an unwanted heritage.

Despite this fact, both types of buildings maintained their iconic status, which can lead to its renewed re-signification—a process that may be heralded by a new reception of the Ivo Andrić's opus, possibly to be expected after the 2013 re-issue of the Nobel prize winner's collected works in Croatia.

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<sup>39</sup> V. Kulić, *Architecture and Ideology in Socialist Yugoslavia*, [in:] *Unfinished Modernisations. Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, eds. M. Mrduljaš, V. Kulić. Zagreb 2012; B. Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism*, Pittsburgh 2014, p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. e.g. J. Prokopljević, *Do Not Throw Concrete Blocks! Social and Public Housing in New Belgrade and Their Representations in Popular Culture*, "Fusion Journal" 2015, No. 6.

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